

Common Lilac



Common Lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*)

General Description

A medium to large hardy shrub with stout, spreading branches developing a somewhat oval to irregularly rounded crown. Spreads by suckering. Showy, fragrant flowers.

Leaves and Buds

Bud Arrangement - Opposite.

Bud Color - Green to brownish-purple with 3 pairs of scales.

Bud Size - Sessile, subglobose, large, 1/4 to 1/2 inch.

Leaf Type and Shape - Simple, cordate.

Leaf Margins - Entire, smooth.

Leaf Surface - Smooth, leathery.

Leaf Length - 2 to 5 inches.

Leaf Width - 1½ to 3½ inches.

Leaf Color - Dark green.

Flowers and Fruits

Flower Type - Perfect, fragrant, borne in large terminal panicles, singles and doubles.

Flower Color - White to purple, a variety of colors.

Fruit Type - Woody capsule. Flat tannish seeds.

Fruit Color - Smooth, brown.

Form

Growth Habit - Upright leggy shrub with irregular outline.

Texture - Medium-coarse, summer; medium-coarse, winter.

Crown Height - 8 to 12 feet.

Crown Width - 6 to 12 feet.

Bark Color - Young bark is green-brown, older bark is gray-brown.

Root System - Shallow, dense.

Environmental Requirements

Soils

Soil Texture - Adapted to a wide variety of soils.

Soil pH - pH is 5.5 to 8.0.

Windbreak Suitability Group - 1, 1K, 3, 4, 4C, 5, 6D, 6G, 7, 8, 9C, 9L.

Cold Hardiness

USDA Zone 2.

Water

Drought tolerant, does not withstand ponding.

Light

Full sun.

Uses

Conservation/Windbreaks

Medium to tall shrub for farmstead windbreaks and highway beautification. Occasionally used in field windbreaks.

Wildlife

Little value for fruit or browse. May be of value for nesting by songbirds.

Agroforestry Products

Floral design - Fragrant cutflowers.

Urban/Recreational

Good for shelter, shrub borders, massing in parks, and screen plantings.

Cultivated Varieties

Hundreds of cultivars/clones of varying flower types and colors.

Related Species

Chinese Lilac (*Syringa x chinensis*) - Excellent lavender flowers, merits use in farmstead windbreaks, 5 to 7 feet hedges or screens, or specimen shrub.

Late Lilac (*S. villosa*)

Miss Kim Lilac (*S. patula* 'Miss Kim') - Very dense, rounded form, pink flowers, slow-growing to 10 to 12 feet.

Palibin Dwarf Lilac (*S. meyeri* 'Palibin') (syn. Korean Dwarf Lilac) - Similar to Miss Kim but grows 6 to 7½ feet tall.

Pests

Common diseases include powdery mildew. Common lilac is a host of ash yellows, but the impact is not known. Common insect pests include lilac borer. Extracts from *Syringa* species are toxic to insect pests.